



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340-4394  
Town Clerk (860)441-6640  
Town Manager  
(860)441-6630

**Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Heather Sherman Bond, Kathryn M. Brown-Tracy, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter**

**Tuesday, March 10, 2009**

**6:00 PM**

**Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1**

#### **SPECIAL MEETING**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Watson called the meeting to order.*

**2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Brown-Tracy, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter  
Members Absent: Councilor Bond and Councilor Monteiro

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent.*

**3. Calendar and Communications**

*None.*

**4. Approval of Minutes**

**2009-0064 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)**

**RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meeting of February 24, 2009 are hereby accepted and approved.

**A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adopt.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

**2009-0062 Chelsea Groton Foundation Grant - Arts Cafe-Mystic**

**Discussed**

*John Silsby presented the purpose of the grant.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Streeter, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Votes:** In Favor: 6 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter  
Abstain: 1 - Councilor Brown-Tracy

**2008-0294 Home Connecticut Program**

**Discussed**

*Mr. Oefinger gave a summary of the reason why a representative of Home Connecticut had come before the committee several weeks ago, particularly their aim to find additional ways for people to buy a home in the community where they work, using aid from other community elements.. Councilor Sheets said that she supports our continuing involvement in Home CT. She said that although Groton meets the criteria for an adequate proportion of affordable housing, she hopes the town will keep this purpose in mind.*

Councilor O'Beirne asked if the Ct Home concepts are under consideration in the land regulations update project. Oefinger mentioned state funding that has been available to help towns find sites for affordable housing. But he said it is best for affordable housing to be interspersed throughout a town according to its overall infrastructure. Navy Housing is considered as within our affordable inventory. Mr. Oefinger added that he thought Groton should participate in a funded planning, education and research project.

Mr. O'Beirne said he has concerns if an affordable housing movement were to be achieved by means of creating zoning overlays. Mr. Oefinger said that we will need a resolution in order to apply for study funding. It was agreed to bring this referral back for a future meeting of the Committee of the Whole.

**2009-0019      FYE 2010 Budget**

**Discussed**

Mr. Oefinger mentioned the various contents of the packets that were put on the dais, and included the Proposed Budget and CIP. He summarized increases and decreases, only within major divisions of the budget.

**2008-0092      Creation of a Town Garden**

**Discussed**

Staff present at the table included John Silsby, Eileen Cicchese and Ben Morse from Parks and recreation. Mr. Silsby talked about his report and an organization chart, noting that there are four subcommittees: Planning, Education, Funding, and Management.

Mayor Watson asked if they can get children involved. He was told that Grass technical High School's greenhouse is working on propagation of seedlings already. Groton Public Library will work on carrying out educational aspects of the gardening. Councilor Kolnaski was amazed and impressed that Parks and Recreation Department staff and the volunteer committees had accomplished so much in a couple of months since they met with Group 2. Councilor Sheets had several questions. Can there be more sites? Eileen Cicchese replied that they believe more sites will be feasible, but they need to make everything come out right in one place to begin with. She also said that while there is understandable interest by some for having private plots, there is definitely enthusiasm for a communal plot. All this has happened since January 7th, and the likely location is now behind the Human Services Department at 2 Fort Hill Road. Mariellen French, a member of the committee, was recognized from the audience. She said there is so much interest and appreciation for this project that some members are ready to start digging and planting right now. Staff said that they anticipated that some produce from the communal plots would be made available to food banks or charities.

**2009-0009      Legislative Policy (2009 Standing Referral)**

**Discussed**

Mr. Vincent told some details on the state budget outlook from the CCM meeting that morning. He said that while we always use the Governor's budget in our Proposed Budget, the whole situation has deteriorated a lot since the Governor spoke. He said that according to plans now before the legislature there would be shocking cuts, with possible closure of campuses of the regional technical colleges and one of the state university locations, as examples. He said that someone would have to give in, and that the Governor's refusal to consider new revenues might have to be compromised.

Mr. Oefinger was asked if the Council should immediately start assuming a worse revenue situation when acting on the just-distributed budget documents. He said that it would not be wise to start on a second plan until the base or foundational plan is first understood by all present, as fully as we can.

Mr. Vincent mentioned that in the previous Tuesday's special meeting with our legislators, the

councilors did not give Rep. Wright an answer when she asked if they would be ready to revoke the statement of opposition to her open space deed restriction Bill 5264 that was stated in Mr. Vincent's e-mails of February 25, based on the Committee of the Whole meeting of February 24. Councilor Sheets said she thought that Mr. Vincent had gone too far in writing that the Groton Town Council specifically opposed Ms. Wright's bill. Mr. Vincent said that the motion or suggestion that began the discussion leading to a consensus to send a letter was that the Town Council should support the CCM position. Mr. Vincent said that, since the CCM position was that the bill was not acceptable unless it would be substantially changed, that the CCM position was essentially one of opposition until further notice, and that was the thought he tried to embody in composing the message he sent.

It was agreed by informal consensus that Mr. Vincent should convey to the Environment Committee that the Town Council does not now stand in opposition to the bill, neither does it support the bill, but desires further information and discussion. Most Committee of the Whole members present said they would like to wait before taking a further position, and Councilor Kolnaski asked that a separate referral be entered for Elissa Wright's open space bill.

It was agreed that legislators would be invited to a legislative breakfast meeting at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 17.

**2009-0034      Disposition of Eastern Point School Property**

**Discussed**

Members discussed having a public hearing on the possible sale of the property on Tuesday, April 7th.

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to conduct a public hearing on the disposition of the Eastern Point School property on April 7, 2009.

The motion carried unanimously

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, to refer the disposition of Eastern Point School property to the Planning Commission under CGS 8-24.

The motion carried unanimously

**2009-0065      Disposition of Colonel Ledyard School Property**

**Discussed**

A previous resolution in this matter resulted in its referral to the Groton Planning Commission, on a potential lease of the property to the City of Groton. A public hearing will be necessary, and April 7th at 7:30 p.m. was discussed.

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to hold a public hearing on the disposition of Colonel Ledyard School property on April 7, 2009.

The motion carried unanimously

**2008-0121      Condition of Chipperini Property on Library Street**

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Streeter, to enter executive session at 7:04 p.m. to discuss the condition of the Chipperini Property on Library Street, and to invite the Town Manager to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

The executive session concluded at 7:22 p.m.

**6.      ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.